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THE RESONANT CAVITY OF THE SHOPPING MALL

ECONOFICTION BAUDRILLARD, DIGITALIZATION, DISOUNTER, ONSUMPTION, SHOPPING MALL

The Shopping Centre

Why should one still read Baudrillard today? Paradoxically, many of Baudrillard's poststructuralist texts, which were rightly often perceived as science fiction texts, are dated, and some of his texts, apart from the fact that there are general doubts about his simulation theory, are really no exception.¹ However, it is precisely some of the everyday phenomena that have long since become normal that interest us and that Baudrillard recognized early on, as if he had stopped an image in the sense of an exploratory photograph, phenomena that often leave us largely untouched today, perhaps even compared to Baudrillard's writings, since one is perhaps already too normalized and too dulled to perceive them at all. So it seems that with regard to the three syntheses of time described by Deleuze (present, past and future), the contemporary consumer is governed entirely by the habit that belongs to the present.

In 1970 Baudrillard immediately analyzed the first existing shopping malls and defined them as a materialized synthesis of abundance and calculation at the same time. At that time, they were already marked out as places where one can get lost but experience nothing but enjoying the sight of the shop windows of ubiquitous company chains, which represent a spawn of ultramodern small-mindedness, in the mode of a liquid television. Any attempt to ascribe Benjamin's aura of the Parisian passages of the 19th century to these shopping malls had to fail from the outset. Today, boredom bites your face when you walk through the shopping streets of the big metropolises.

It is so well known that Baudrillard sees the shopping center not merely as an optimized arrangement of types of goods, but as a spatialized exhibition of signs that are always discreet and at the same time interrelated, yet always remain part of a totality of signs of prosperity. And so the sterile white cultural centre, which today propagates the global middle class quite unspoilt and impudent with its guiding values of singularity, cosmopolitanism, tolerance and cleverness, mutated into an integral component of the shopping centre early on, so that the goods could quickly be culturalised and transformed into playful elegance and distinctive substance.

To break it down to a few numbers in relation to the supermarket: On average, the consumer spends two years of his life in the supermarket with cheese, meat and other groceries on the shelves, or in the display cases with frozen food, and finally, to top it all off, in the queues at the cash registers. Statistically, he travels 3800 kilometers and yet supposedly only takes about three seconds to select a product and pull it off the shelf and put it in his shopping cart, a reaction time roughly reminiscent of the

behavior of a conditioned rat in the Skinner Box. Like a kind of subtly controlled camera movement, the consumers flow and circulate collectively and at the same time sporadically, the latter means mostly without any eye contact to each other, and as if of their own accord and enclosed in the hermaphroditic milieu of the goods through the air-conditioned and sometimes still shallowly musical shopping centres, in which they are digested and spat out on the streets with bags full of goods. (Baudrillard 2015: 47) In order to increase the speed of circulation and the purchasing effectiveness of consumers flowing through supermarkets, a kind of invisible control system is needed that takes place in a well-regulated room temperature and is consumed without objection. Shopping malls, on the other hand, are seemingly light zones of crossing through, which in their sober and sobering fluidity expose those crossing through to a cinematic transience and thereby set in motion a kinetics of transit landscapes. A non-place that is simultaneously distant and close and permanently in motion, that is framed in boutiques, electronics shops, multimedia restaurants and designer bars and quietly flooded by white elements of light and invisible waves of muzak. Wherever the desire goes for a walk with the machine, it finds the right consumers for the goods in the shopping centre and the right goods for the consumers. With verve and yet without passion, the bodies of the shopping movers glide smoothly through corridors and boutiques, while the glances are seamlessly guided through all the comfort installations of the shopping centers and simultaneously controlled and scanned by cameras. The cameras are used for Tayloristic and algorithmic analysis, which is carried out by means of pixelation, decomposition and splitting of the shopping environment the specification, anticipation and control of consumption and ultimately goes hand in hand with a far-reaching de-qualification of the consumer, which, however, correlates positively with an increase in his purchasing productivity.

It is no longer a fantasy that in the future supermarket shelves will be covered with a smart skin equipped with RFID technology that recognizes, analyzes and communicates with customers in order to operationalize certain purchasing parameters that optimize the purchasing behavior of customers, especially for the company. The consumer observes – without further reflection – the colorful packaging, feels free and relaxed, without suspecting that each of his own views is transformed into digitalized clicks in real time and integrated into an algorithmic observation network (Foucault). At the same time, various effects stimulate the individual visual act and animate the pre-cognitive act to buy, because, among other things, eye movement scanners collect detailed information about buying behavior, based on the momentum of how long a purchased or unsold product is viewed and bought or not bought, from which artificial machines draw their conclusions in order to propose purchase modifications to the company, which the consumers follow quasi-automatically. Today, the supermarket is one of the most effectively monitored places with cameras and this goes as far as spying out and processing emotions that are read from the customer's facial expressions when looking at a product, with which the digital devices transform into emotion enhancers and mood brighteners if they make appropriate specifications when shopping, perhaps a yogurt, whose special bacterial culture allegedly strengthens the resistance forces, with of course nothing being said about its production process and about possible damage to people and the environment, like other products tell nothing about slave labour on the orange plantations in Brazil, about the dairy farmers who have to sell below their production price, about the destruction of the rainforest by the palm oil plantations in Malaysia.

The supermarket is to be driven as close as possible to a kind of roundabout centre, flooded with electronic stimuli, machine analysts and cheap pop music, but this centre no longer functions as a liquid TV, as Arthur Kroker did at the end of the 20th century. Instead, it is a liquid computer that analyses the buying behavior of customers without any interruption and then ejects incentives and options for purchase in order to network, spur on and optimize the desire, the affluent desire to buy and the enjoyment that circulates in the many individual human microcircuits. Permanent Vacation and Travelling Panoramieren, both under the control of invisible dissemination algorithms, include a constant anticipatory formatting of the liquefaction processes of buying. For example, Walmart uses an app for "predictive shopping" with which the company's analysts, based on their knowledge of a customer's history and the volume of previous purchases, create special new shopping lists for the customer with so-called desired goods and send them to his smartphone. Ultimately, machine-organized decisions lead to the addition of other machine-organized sales decisions, based on data profiles that result from the machine-processed processing of customers' purchases and search engine entries. As if that were not enough, a personal digital food butler is delivered free to the consumer's door, who goes to the online market and searches for the algorithmically recommended desired goods.

To sum it up once again: Cameras and sensors are attached to the shelves, shopping trolleys and counters of the neoliberal cloud supermarkets, which in turn are wirelessly connected to the supermarket's central computer, which is constantly fed with genetic algorithms that not only react to the customers' buying behavior in order to communicate with them via smartphones and tablets, but which also set purchase modifications in motion by anticipating purchase decisions and submitting purchase proposals, which above all accommodates the wishless unhappiness of middle-class consumers, which quickly turns into the desire to have all filter bubble goods and want to dispose of them again immediately. The data streams resulting from the observation of purchasing behavior are permanently monitored by the supermarket's internal merchandise management system. And the customer can now thankfully also check on his smartphone which foods he is allergic to by holding the device like a camera in front of a full shelf and then immediately recognizing the image of the selected food on the display, which is either marked with a red X or a green hook. It is hardly worth mentioning that the shopping list has already been stored in a cloud at home, where it can be called up at any time via the smartphone when entering the supermarket and compared with the products that are currently available in the supermarket's merchandise management system. If there is no product on the shopping list, the customer is immediately offered alternative suggestions. Ideally, the customer's navigation system will immediately guide him to the right shelf. And not to forget, the supermarket is of course a greedy data grabber, insofar as there are a number of interfaces that connect current personal information with information that has long been available to a retail chain, so that the most accurate product offers can continue to be made.

In the future supermarket, the solvent customer shares the infosphere with a series of artificial agents who act smartly, autonomously and also allegedly socially, up to a point where the customer resembles a fish in the water, but who does not know the water, or he even resembles a pitiful thing that goes down in the digital ocean of goods without leaving bubbles behind. In this digital bestiarium, the consumer is really fully connected to digital machines, his purchasing behavior is tracked down to the smallest detail, tracked and traced, in order to be fed as data into the algorithmic machines and analyzed, processed and modulated by them. Even in supermarkets there is now a sophisticated algorithmic governance that is based on ubiquitous digital technologies that are used to design the offerings of smart supermarkets – very naively also called “autonomic computing” and “ambient computing”, technologies whose invisibility makes them all the more active and efficient. Clearly, the most profound technologies are those that are invisible because they weave themselves so naturally into the networks of everyday life that they are ultimately indistinguishable from them.

Meanwhile, Internet monopolists like Amazon are also pushing their way into food retailing. And we have long been able to meet our basic needs online by subscription. Visits to supermarkets are becoming rarer. The Amazon company earns money by collecting customer data about what consumers buy and thus knows their buying habits by heart. This will probably lead to consumers no longer looking at a completely differentiated assortment of goods on the Amazon website in the future, but being presented with very specific goods in a very close-meshed filter bubble that are relatively likely to be bought because they correspond exactly to the buyer profiles. Under the label “Personalization”, Amazon uses algorithmic methods that give us book recommendations based on previous orders, whereby it is most efficient when you get a book that you really want. In this case, the algorithms know the customer’s wishes before they become clear to themselves or reflexively treat the wish, so that we can speak of a pre-emptive personality. ‘

The neo-liberal vision of the high-class cloud supermarket has a fully integrated digital infrastructure, it is a dreamland especially for the upper-class, while it looks very different for the workers and employees, the migrants and the precarious, who are excluded from the high-class supermarkets a priori. Although today’s traditional supermarkets still encounter different social strata and can easily analyze them using the products in their shopping carts, they are not the only ones to be affected by this. And yet supermarkets are increasingly developing into ghettos adapted to their respective classes. There is a significant gap between the cheap discounter with a product range of around 1000 products and the high-class supermarket with up to 50,000 products, which in turn points to the slow disappearance of the secure positions of the middle class, which is increasingly having to make do with the goods from the discounter. The middle class wants to continue consuming luxury goods, but often enough it can only afford to consume a picture on a flat screen, while more often than not it has to make do with the no-name products in the discounter, which the branded goods don’t even necessarily copy anymore, because they are often enough packaged in a stylish way. Furthermore, one tries of course to counteract the brand goods with shrill design by going to the edge of copyright infringement, for example when a brand design is quoted and made redundant on packaging. (Seeßlen190) At the same time, discounters are now organizing their own product lines or organic goods for the slightly more sophisticated wallet and are thus competing with the classic supermarkets of the middle class.

It is striking that people who are able to spend a lot of money are using their consumption as a kind of psychological doping, thereby creating the basis for further recognition and further success, while those who have little money are excluded from these effective and almost salutary placebo effects and are thus falling further and further behind in consumerist competition. However, even in consumption there are always overlaps between the classes and diffuse hybrid forms which then forbid talking about explicit class consumption, not only because luxury and asceticism, for example in spiritualized bodily delusion, enter into strange marriages, but because the luxury goods often hardly differ from the gimmick or the one-euro product, because the sublime and the obscene, the vulgar and the tasteful mix indistinguishably in a new product which should actually carry the name “delusional aggregate”. The only difference between the diamond ring, which shines on the hand of a super-rich woman, and the ring from the chewing gum machine is the price. And it is only when the Porsche is decorated with a one-euro mascot that it wins a new insane existence, celebrating the delirium of the crazy symbol, which the elite demonstrate in order to proclaim the end of the aesthetic, without even knowing it. Metz/Seeßlen write: “The point is that luxury is just as much to be found in the one-euro shop as in the glamour and money agglomerations through which the goats move.” The originality of star existence, its singularity, its power of fascination and seductibility, as demonstrated by the media day after day, is not so fundamentally different from that of the average citizen; rather, the celebrity is miraculously stamped with the stamp of originality on his or her own toilet on TV by the media lighting, which, so to speak, adds up and accumulates its signs of originality, which in turn leads to the stars managing meaninglessness more and more intensively until their vanity reaches the apex at which their own brand diffuses into the existing product structure. Even the toilet paper in the white-designed and somehow atmospherically charged toilet receives a sacred dignity, a value whose affectedness consists in the fact that the celebrity would prefer to wipe his ass in front of a running camera.

Even the designer products of the art industry don’t look much better today than the half successful re-arrangements of Nippes in the one-euro shops like Kik. (seeßlen 177) And the fact that the elites, creative people and celebrities cultivate an identical style of living proves that the question of furnishing a home is not a question of singularity, but of becoming accustomed to the extraordinarily ordinary, which, contrary to the habits of the underclass, to whom habits are imposed, one likes to voluntarily take on oneself and one’s products. Their originality, allegedly represented by a high degree of complexity and density, as well as by otherness, is the cultivated fiction of their writers, who now interpret qualities into the products that they themselves find cool, a euphemism that corresponds to the exclusivity of an academic circle whose luxury consists in letting it circle in itself.

The price of a branded product, which is determined by the value of the product in money induced by the necessary abstract

work plus the signs and distinguishing marks associated with it, is today often additionally linked to the ranking of the brand. The brand, which must contain a logo, a picture, an image, a discourse and a narrative, and which best exhibits an A celebrity face, should really be able today to set spiritual, domestic, national or sexual energies in motion among consumers, for example Germany as a consumer article for 80 million absolute monarchs, for whom the ideology of the homeland has become the new solstice fire of the neon age and who take the playful testing out of possibilities of the right taboo break thoroughly seriously, whereby even the pre-fascist migratory birds among them still specialize in their odyssey through the consumption labyrinth on the lying together nature experience of the "I myself", which still promises authenticity, if they do not just once again on the street "We are the "people" bawl out. Today's leading brands, which emerged after the brand crisis of the 1990s, are forced to stage or simulate a lifestyle by gently governing or directing consumers, and interesting examples are Lonsdale's garments, whose value is determined by the changing "cultures" they somehow appropriate.

The design of relevant branded products incorporates various forms of self-representation and images or lifestyle concepts, whereby the spread of a new trend (invoking a deviation from the norm) functions like an unknown spread algorithm that allows individuals to easily thread themselves into consumer loops (which has little to do with an individual purchasing decision), which in turn dramatise the advertising and designer industries in order to force the hype and thus force an affective attunement of the body. The act of shopping sticks to the goods and yet remains peculiarly abstract, not only because shopping for the sake of shopping remains stuck in the tautology of the worlds of experience and in the triumphalism of self-referential shopping habits that surround and stage shopping by channelling the flow of purchases, but because shopping is increasingly taking place as a client-server relationship, with experience enhancers, experience enhancers and experience substitutes being made available in real time via e-empire in all time zones, so that shopping is also increasingly taking place in the virtual medium in which the user, interface and screen are integrated as a network system. Not only neoliberalism with its propaganda of the financially risky subject or neoclassicism with its rational homo economicus provide the scientific arsenal of justifications for the subjectifications it contains, but also behaviorism or behavior economics, which processes the economization of desires with the means of psychology and feigns a last human being who either works or consumes, otherwise man simply does not exist. Using specific technologies, this applied behavioral science à la Skinner wants to observe, analyze, calculate, and automatically and purposefully strengthen purchasing behavior in order to stage the truly profitable changes that are simply necessary for corporations. According to Baudrillard, consumption is only apparently the freedom of the consumer, who can choose between a wide range of goods, but the abundance of objects and possibilities for consumption is more tied to magical thinking. The monstrosity full of colourful shelves does not live from the promise of satisfying needs, but from the "abundance" of signs and design, and furthermore from the "accumulation of signs of happiness" (ibid.: 48). Baudrillard writes: "It is about the consumed image of consumption. This is the new tribal mythology, the morality of modernity." (ibid.: 284/5) And further: "So it is not true that the needs are the result of production, rather the system of needs is the product of the production system". (ibid.: 109) In addition, the fragmented consumer subject is composed of various acts of purchase, which are not oriented solely on price, but on a patchwork of narrative identifications, on design and signs, on a machinery of desire; the consumer subject accentuates in the system of abundance and prosperity, but also the scarcity, since compared to the needs and desires triggered and increased by advertising, the financial means for satisfying the needs of large sections of the population are still lacking, while at the same time a cycle of desire, which does not want to end, insists on them too, which only dramatizes the thing with consumption.¹

The Discounter

Disposable goods are offered in abundance in discount stores, from paper clips to beer glasses with any emblem to pink boxes, and perhaps their purchase may nourish the mood of small happiness among the proletarians for a second (their abundance or their overproduction would be the luxury here), before the nightmare becomes reality, when the fright goes directly into the brain of the consumer, who is suspended because he is only conditionally able to pay, when he realizes that this kind of excess of waste can no longer be separated from garbage, and so these objects do not attain their true purpose in use, but at most at a time when the next bulky garbage is due, they are not disposed of long before or sold on Ebay. However, the lower classes learn quickly and therefore adhere much more to devices that offer the real presence among their peers, namely digital devices, social platforms and their apps.

Everyone has known for a long time that the customers of discounters usually have to do without the sophisticated staging, flattery and artful designs of expensive brand products, and so the environment at Aldi & Co also has much harder and more spartan contours than that in the luxury supermarkets for higher earners. Meter-long rows of packaging, serial arrangements and efficient design have long since sealed the end of ornamentation, staging and exhibition or fetishism (that of the Crystal Palace and the Passages) in these civilized miserable spaces. The difference production of the goods is largely replaced by similarity (divided, co-shaped) and smoothed out into a homogeneous consumer format. And the security service quietly and discreetly points out that in a discount store one is not only received as a relatively affluent customer, but also as a potential shoplifter. At the beginning, discounters in Germany with their initially manageable and quite simple range of goods were in the tradition of the US supermarkets of the 1920s and 1930s, when people in the USA began to gradually rationalise the act of buying. The portioning and packaging of the goods in the small grocery stores at a service counter was clearly too labour-intensive over time, and of course the consultation and small chat with the customers cost too much time. On the other hand, the supermarket was quickly and efficiently implemented as an automated sales factory, the industrially packaged goods could be accessed quickly and easily, and the conveyor belt at the checkout functioned as an assembly line for standardized consumption. With the Great Depression of 1929, supermarkets in the USA finally began their triumphal march and consumers were more price-conscious than ever before.

In post-war Germany, discounters like Aldi followed this example and even sold the few products on offer directly from the delivery pallets. In this segment, which is still highly concentrated in Germany today and whose facilities could well be called consumer factories or Stalinist forced feeding stations, the few companies in the early days still fought merciless price wars among themselves (these are now waged by discounters against producers), while today, as far as price is concerned, there is a tendency towards cooperative agreements between the companies, in order nevertheless to lead a fierce competition on the level of design, trivialised luxury goods and marketing. Sometimes the functional, spacious halls even create the appearance of classless consumption, where the rich and poor meet, even if they don't fall into each other's arms, in order to then simply look at the checkout to see who has put something on the treadmill. So the class wars also take place at the cash desk.²

The enormous positivity of the discounters manifests itself as an extensible, differentiated homogeneity and at the same time as a buyable simulation of a clearly regulated excess, as a regulated buying action that has lost all negativity in the repetition of the same. No wonder, then, that the amount of garbage correlates with the amount of garbage that consumers on the streets, in squares, in buses and in trains segregate and scatter. The pornography of the hyper-communicatives, which is presented as cosmopolitanism and tolerance, is also fattening up against the excess of what is ultimately the same; after all, everything has already been said. Or, to put it another way, you say what everyone says, you have what everyone has, and you grill when everyone is grilling. (Metz/Seeßlen 2011)

2000ff., in the consumer sector gate this is above all the triumph of the discounters (and the altitude), who are regularly visited not only by the lower classes and the precariat, but also by some of the middle classes. Discounters and real wage stagnation are intimately related, indeed reinforce each other. Of course, the discounters supply the lower classes in particular with disease-causing substances – fat, sugar, alcohol, nicotine and salt – sustainably and cheaply, in order to produce a statistically calculable clinical picture in addition to securing their survival. The discounters, who have re-established the indiscreet charm of a food establishment in which people shit on real enjoyment instead of the fluid liquid screens of the shopping centres, are today also suppliers of cheap gadgets, games and drawing goods; they are the cultural centre and the perception machine of the lower class. It is no coincidence to us, of course, that the state today calculates the level of its social benefits for the unemployed and needy on the basis of discounters' prices, while the forced food companies (ibid.) are becoming richer and richer as a result of growing poverty (forced feeders and accelerators of poverty), the poor are becoming more and more poor, and the poor are becoming more and more vulnerable.

Consumption

The shopping mall has not disappeared from the scene yet. And, of course, Baudrillard's so magnificently described consumption system has not disappeared, even though, as we have already seen, some modifications of consumption can currently be proven. For Baudrillard, it is not goods that are the primary goal of satisfying needs, but the prestige acquired with their purchase, i.e. consumption is a process of social differentiation and classification. The signs of the goods do not only indicate significant differences in the code, but they also manifest the status values within a social hierarchy of classes. Consumers experience the distinguishing behaviour, which refers to the purchase of products, as freedom and not as the compulsion to differentiate oneself and obey a code. For Baudrillard, on the other hand, consumption forces even the emotional duty to enjoy, so that a systematic and systemically organized consumption can be assumed. (This is something quite different from the expenditure and waste mentioned in Bataille's economy, the most outstanding actor of which is the sun, which wastes itself on pure groundlessness). And the consumer experiences his pleasure as absolute, without registering the structural compulsion at all, whereby this ensures permanent change, while the fundamental order of differences remains intact. Baudrillard states a compulsion to relativity that provides the framework for a never-ending differentiation that precisely promotes the boundlessness of consumption. While the prestige sticks to the positive difference, the distinctive signs also know the negative difference: one does not consume the object, one merely follows the manipulation of the objects as signs.

Thus the product can already mutate into an interchangeable sign of desire, even more so, the products and desires stage a "generalized hysteria" that promotes consumption as a kind of objectless desire, a desire that insists even without the object's choice and consumption. This is why the currently ultrapopular cooking show can function in the unimaginable dimensions only in the first place, because the proletarian, who remains excluded from real enjoyment, apparently doesn't find anything in it if his consumption in front of the television only eats his eyes, since it's only about the visual enjoyment of the cooks' culinary arts and top performances reminiscent of professional sport. Thus, consumption is not oriented towards utility value, but towards the production and manipulation of social semiotypes and signifiers, or, to put it another way, consumption is a process of signification and communication, based on a (class-specific) code that inscribes itself continuously and at the same time invisibly into consumer practices. For Baudrillard, consumption is a system of exchange and an equivalent to language. However, the consumption of the upper class, like the movement of capital, takes place in a kind of spiral movement in which the needs are so differentiated that their complete coverage is no longer possible, so that the satisfaction of even the last banal need awakens another, a reflexive need. Finally, for the shopping addict, the object of consumption or the commodity mutates into garbage. Then the acquired products are stacked in the cellar or placed in display cases, because ultimately only the enjoyment of the act of purchase counts, which in turn is stimulated by information and advertising. Baudrillard rightly adds that desires and products are by no means produced according to the same logic and rhythm. While the production of goods remains dependent on the productivity of capital, the production of desires is based on cultural differentiation and the appropriation of symbolic capital. The differentiation of products must therefore be set in a very specific way in relation to the differentiation of desires (which of course are ultimately defined by the level of income). And more and more often the desires grow faster than the available goods, whereby for a larger part of the population only the consumer credit provides a short-term remedy here, i.e. the consumer uses

his future income for present consumption or operates a small ego bank with a fine, small credit business, in which the goods bought on credit prove to be securities for new credits – the more credits one takes out, the more credit one receives. You don't think of the poor parts of the world's population.

The ecological footprint alone shows that the rich live on a global, national, regional and urban level at the expense of the poor, and that costs the poorest of the poor their lives first. This form of structural violence takes place at the expense of the poorest of the poor. This form of structural violence takes place discreetly from the perspective of those born in the feel-good oases; it is allegedly not a simple causal connection. But one might then shiver quietly when looking into the Instagram Account of Astro-Alex, who photographed the drought in Europe from space in the summer of 2018, while in Pakistan thousands drown in the floods of rain.

Consumption does not give us knowledge of the world, nor does it exercise ignorance. It is a misjudgement that is driven by the marketing industry's constantly stimulated curiosity. André Gorz had already remarked 30 years ago that the specialists employed in the marketing departments knew exactly that a large part of the superfluous waste produced would not be bought by anyone. On the one hand, consumption thus promotes the active moment (everything must be tried out) of a generalised curiosity transformed into diffuse activity, but on the other it also promises reassurance, self-enjoyment and satisfaction. This corresponds roughly to Žižek's stated triumph of products that cultivate the paradox of the product (relaxation and excitement at the same time, e.g. coffee consumption, non-alcoholic beer, decaffeinated coffee, low-fat yoghurt, etc.), whereby consumption is fixed on an adversative structure of ubiquitous enjoyment: Follow the path to bulimia consistently by eating more in order to achieve the goal of anorexia or eat more in order to lose weight more quickly, which on the one hand assures participation in enjoyment qua imperative, and on the other hand at the same time defuses the excessive moment attached to the consumption of some products. We find similar tendencies in the consumption of disciplines (potency systems, including aesthetics, acrobatics and therapeutics, clinical criteria and self-technologies, gastronomy and (digitized) fun technologies, plus deviant sexual procedures and rituals of doping and drug consumption, various training techniques). The function of motivational research in the field of consumption is to generate a constant demand on the markets, whereby the system of desires degenerates into a manoeuvring mass, which Baudrillard describes as a consumer force or as the form of rational systematization of productive forces on an individual level. In the system of signs, however, the products are no longer bound to a single need or a single function, but are overwritten or at least overlapped by a mobile and unconscious field of signification.

At this point Baudrillard can be summarized as follows: 1) Consumption is primarily not a function of pleasure, but a function of the circulation of capital. Production and consumption inaugurate one and the same logical process of the reproduction of capital. Consumers are assigned to a collective code. 2) Consumption ensures the arrangement of signs and the integration of classes. 3) Consumption is based on a code of signs and their differences, the latter establishing the microstructure towards the code, the integration into a mobile scale of values. 4) Consumption implies less the functional use of products than a sophisticated system of communication and circulation.

Norbert Bolz, who wrote the still halfway critical "Consumerist Manifesto", sings today the neoliberal hymn of praise to consumption. Bolz describes consumerism as the immune system of world society. If all people consumed at the highest reflexive level, there would be no more fundamentalism or terrorism. What Bolz celebrates as reflexive consumption, however, are the consumer practices of green-urban consumers, who – tested in media and marketing – in the course of their madness of singularity and authenticity believe that they are equipped with sufficient insight to be immune to ubiquitous marketing campaigns and mass consumption, so that they can enjoy all the more refreshingly the brand culture trimmed to art in the gentrified centers of the world's cities. One celebrates singular self-discovery through consumption, because it is supposedly precisely in this way that one undermines the system that always only apparently imposes an identity on one. The target groups hotly courted by the advertising industry should really believe that they are immune to marketing, propaganda and seduction, while they fit seamlessly into the consumption system precisely in the course of the singularity hypes staged by marketing. Philip Mirowski writes: "Living experience is replaced by lifestyles, and the contradiction between a sense of belonging and individuality must be tolerated. (Mirowski 2015: 2714; Kindle-Edition) In this context, FairTrade, sustainability and other ethically oriented modes of consumption gain a very cozy individual touch. After all, ethical consumption celebrates the expression of one's own personality rather than wanting to know or even change something about the production and distribution methods of such products, which are mostly based on land theft and massive exploitation. So the rebellion mutates into the leisure pleasure of the middle classes: simulated rebellion in consumption and guerrilla marketing coincide. Second or third order consumption, which is supposed to integrate the constant self-transformation of consumers, is imposed. It is even suggested to him that he organizes projects in and with consumption with which he undermines any attempt of marketing to impose an identity imposed on him from outside. Moreover, consumers buy products without using them, but use them for advertising, which in turn generates new consumption.

For Baudrillard, the freedom of consumption is a pure mystification, that is, it is forced upon one the freedom of choice in consumption, or, to extend it even further, the system of consumption completes the imposed voting system – shopping mall and voting booth are systemically produced places of individual freedom, both of which are only consumed. Adorno/Horkheimer had already formulated this in a similar way: "But advertising becomes information when there is actually nothing left to choose, when brand recognition substitutes the electoral process, and when at the same time the totality of the system forces everyone who wants to preserve his life to perform such services out of calculation. This happens under the monopolistic mass culture. Three stages can be distinguished in the unfolding of dominion over need: Advertising, information, command. As an omnipresent announcement, mass culture transfers these stages into one another." (Adorno/Horkheimer 1969: 133)

According to Baudrillard, the relationship between consumption and time is based on three assumptions: Time is the dimension a priori. It is there and is waiting for us. Leisure time is the realm of freedom. Every human being is by nature free and equal. The claim of leisure is to return time to its utility value, but, as Baudrillard points out, in the context of the leisure industry it can only be freed as chronometric capital of years, hours and minutes, a capital in which one must invest. Time therefore remains short and subject to the laws of exchange value. And finally, not only working time, but also consumption time – the free time gained by consuming a product that needs to be consumed immediately and not first frozen – mutates into interest-bearing capital, into a virtual productive force that one has to buy.

In the context of therapeutic care, another side effect of consumption, consumers finally regress to nursing cases: “In this sense once again the TWA, the “airline that understands you”. And see how well it understands you: “For us, the thought of knowing you alone in your hotel room, zapping wildly through the television programs, is hardly bearable. We want to do everything we can so that you can take your better half with you on your next business trip ... with the special family rate, etc. With your better half at your side you have at least someone with whom you can switch the TV ... that’s what we call love ...”. The question is not whether you are alone – you do not have the right to be alone, because “for us it is unbearable”. If you don’t know what happiness is, we’ll teach you, we know it better than you and we know how to fuck your better “half” when it’s your second program, your erotic channel. You didn’t know that? Then you will also learn that with us. Because that is what we are here for. To understand you – this task is ours ... (Baudrillard 2015: 249) Today, however, the computer expresses itself somewhat more distinguished:

“lovesickness? Visit our brandy department!

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